

**HERITAGE
OF
MOUNT VERNON PLACE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Washington, D.C.**

ROYCE L. THOMPSON
Church Historian
MAY 1978

900 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

To
Today's and Future Mt. Vernonites



F O R E W O R D

In one of his first visits to Washington, the late United States Senator Robert S. Kerr was in a taxicab driving down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the Capital when he read the inscription on the Archives Building: "What is past is prologue." His driver turned to him and interpreted the slogan for him. "That simply means 'You ain't seen nothing yet,'" explained the driver.

One cannot read the history of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church without getting a thrill out of this congregation's glorious past. It is a story of faith, courage and perseverance. It is a story of daring, sharing and caring. In short, it's a great love story --- a congregation's love for each other, its love for its neighbors not only in the immediate community but throughout the world, and most important of all, its love for God.

G. W. F. Hegel once wrote: "God governs the world; the actual working of His government--the carrying out of His plan--is the History of the World." Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church has recognized this truth through the years. Its history is a carrying out of God's plan.

In planning an observance of Heritage Sunday, 1978, a committee asked Mr. Royce L. Thompson, our eminent church historian, to prepare a brief history of the church which could be presented to each of its members in pamphlet form. The following pages bear witness to his devotion to the task he was assigned. How fortunate and grateful we are to have a person of Mr. Thompson's abilities, background, talents and dedication as our historian. He has made us history-conscious and his efforts have enriched our lives as he has made us aware of our great heritage.

As you read these pages, we hope you will vow to put your own hand to the plow to help make our church's future even more glorious than its past, adding new furrows to those so ably made by those who preceded us.

What about Mount Vernon Place's future? Why, you ain't seen nothing yet!

--Charles L. Ward
Lay Leader

May 21, 1978

OUR HERITAGE

127 Years of Ministry as an Inner City Church!

The 1850's	A Decade of Dedication
The 1860's	A Decade of Courage
The 1870's	Beginning a City Ministry
1880 to 1899	Founding Other Churches
1900 to 1919	Turning into the Present Century
The 1920's	Preaching, Finances, a New Class and Music
The 1930's	Outreach and Deonminational Status
The 1940's	Serving the Nation's Capital
1950 to 1969	Appointments, Evangelism, Contempo- rary Society and Name Change
1970 to 1977	An Inner City Church
In Retrospect -	Distinctive Qualities of our Heritage

The 1850's - A Decade of Dedication

Our church was founded over a century ago in 1850 by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, as the denomination's representing church in the Nation's Capital. A 20-year old Virginian by the name of William Wallace Bennett was appointed as the first pastor of the band of about 50 worshippers who formed the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of Washington City. The congregation immediately elected a Board of Trustees which borrowed \$3630. for the purchase of a building in 1851 as its church home. A few years later, in 1854, the congregation organized the first Sunday School.

Clearly, the little church strove to establish itself, but there were difficulties along the way. A major problem was the high turnover of pastors. Six ministers took turns during the ten year period. The first minister occupied the pulpit only about a year, and the others one or two years. The one-year clergyman was likely a young man of little experience, having been admitted on trial in the Virginia Annual Conference in 1846, only six years before assignment to our church. He became a Confederate chaplain in the Civil War. Each of the other five ministers aided the young church for a short while, but we take pride that all five became stalwarts of the Virginia Conference within a few years. W. W. Bennett, L. Rosser, J. A. Duncan, D. S. Doggett and J. C. Granbery were elected as Virginia Conference delegates to the denomination's 1866 General Conference (first after Civil War) in New Orleans. Later, Messrs Doggett and Granbery were elected as Bishops. Additionally and importantly, all five former pastors strongly supported the interests of their former charge during future years.

In a word, despite difficulties, the congregation demonstrated a sturdy Christian spirit during the first ten years of its service in Washington, D. C.

The 1860's - A Decade of Courage

An even stronger spirit was needed during the next decade. When the Civil War erupted in 1861, our little congregation found itself to be a Southern church located within the headquarters city of the northern forces. Yet, it had a mission to fulfill. Taking advantage of an offer, the congregation sold its building to the Washington Hebrew Congregation during 1863, then the members constructed another building for themselves within a few blocks of the former edifice. But, as the war raged, our church existed the best that it could. When the Civil War ended in 1865, our church was barely alive. It had survived the war, but little more.

A leader was needed to revive the church, then to rebuild it. The Rev. William V. Tudor, a young Marylander, assumed the pastorate. He also married a parishoner who survived him, and who continued to teach the Tudor Class until her own death in the 1930's. Some of our members of today recall Mrs. Tudor with affection.

A change in the official status of the church was an immediate need. Methodist churches have not been independent, as have been the Baptists, and it has been essential for a Methodist church to maintain a supporting connection with other denominational churches of an area through membership in a Conference. Prior to the Civil War, our church belonged to the Virginia Annual Conference. After that conflict, our church transferred to the Baltimore Annual Conference in 1866, its present-day Conference affiliation.

To be sure, that official status was valuable, but the feeble church needed revitalizing. The church took this responsibility under ministerial leadership. The new minister, William V. Tudor, was a dynamic leader, and he quickly inspired the church to restoration. By 1869, the congregation had recovered confidence, capability and foresight. This latter quality was demonstrated in 1868-1869. A new edifice was erected to seat 800 worshippers, but 23 years would pass before the membership reached 800. No matter! In 1869, the congregation proudly marched in a body to its new church home which was located on a corner

of 9th and Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., diagonally across the street from our present building. The site is now a vacant lot.

Moreover, in 1869, we changed our name from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, of Washington City, to Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The words "Mount Vernon Place" became part of our heritage 109 years ago.

As the decade closed, Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was established in the national capital. The laity and the clergy had overcome devastating difficulties with determination and perseverance. Our church laid its spiritual foundations during the 1860's, and it set high standards for succeeding generations of Mount Vernonites.

The 1870's - Beginning a City Ministry

During those years, Mount Vernon Place Church had four pastors. W. V. Tudor came to the church in 1866 and he provided leadership for five years until his reassignment in 1871. S. Samuel Roszel followed with a two-year ministry. He was succeeded by Alpheus W. Wilson who left a special mark on the church during his five-year service. Rev. Wilson struggled to reduce the church debt, and he became known as an eloquent pulpiteer. Mr. Wilson later became one of the four Mount Vernon Place pastors who were elected as Bishops of the denomination. The decade concluded with the pastorate of W. P. Harrison, 1878 to 1892.

1880 to 1899 - Founding Other Churches

This two-decade period was notable for three special reasons. The last one was particularly meaningful because of its spiritual quality.

First, the church debt was paid during the early 1880's.

Secondly, Mount Vernon's oldest church school class as of 1977 was founded in 1886. The A. B. Pugh Bible Class was originally organized some 90 years ago as the J. S. Gardner Class, named after a noted minister of the Baltimore Annual Conference. About two years later, the class renamed itself as the David and Jonathan Class, a name which continued for the next 18 years. In 1906, the name of A. B. Pugh Bible Class was bestowed upon the men's class in honor of its teacher Mr. Arthur B. Pugh who taught the class from 1901 until his death in 1916.

A third action! Mount Vernon Place Church enhanced its stature by an emphasis upon mission work. Under the leadership of three of the five pastors of the period, the church extended its ministry by founding four churches. Pastors Samuel K. Cox, Samuel W. Haddaway and Issac W. Canter were mission-minded. (Other ministers have had other special interests, such as preaching or evangelism.) Those three ministers led movements to organize Epworth, the Marvin, the Del Ray and the Cavalry Churches within the Washington area. That is, they did so with the participation of the congregation. Some lay folk relinquished their membership at Mount Vernon Place to form the nucleus of another congregation.

Our sanctuary displays a symbol of those mission outreaches. The Baptismal Font on the left side of the pulpit, just behind the altar rail, was given to us by the Marvin Church in 1941. During that year, Marvin's building was demolished to make way for the development of the Mall area. As part of the disposition of Marvin's furnishings, its baptismal font (and \$2500.) were bequeathed to Mount Vernon Place. This was Marvin's recognition of the fact that Mount Vernon Place Church had organized the Marvin Church about 30 years earlier.

1900 to 1919 - Turning into the Present Century

When our church entered into the 20th Century, it was a settled church with 50 years of ministry in Washington. The five-decade period of 1850 to 1899 was an example for the future. Surely an historian of 1900 would predict that the clergy and the laity together would meet new challenges with loyalty, with vision, and in a dedicated Christian spirit.

Today, our ministers spend hours of time and miles of car travel in making pastoral calls to hospitals and homes. In contrast, during the 1900's, J. W. Duffey used a bicycle. His successor, F. J. Prettyman, rode horseback.

We had seven pastors between 1900 and 1919. All were dedicated preachers, who held pastorates with us from three to five years, except for one 1-year interval. Each minister made his own contribution to the church. Jefferson W. Duffey (1877-1901) preached "the simple gospel" and he loved personal contact with people. Forrest J. Prettyman (1901-1905) was a pulpiteer by reputation, and he was elected as Chaplain of the United States Senate in 1903 while at Mount Vernon Place. His successor, William F. Locke (1905-1908) was a friendly person who enjoyed ministering with people. J. Howard Wells (1908-1912) liked preaching, but he also had organizational ability. He later became a Presiding Elder of the Washington District as well as the first President of the Board of Trustees of the Methodist Home (present name) in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Although Eldridge V. Regester (1912-1913) stayed only a year at Mount Vernon Place, he later became a three-time Presiding Elder, as well as the editor of the Conference paper, "The Baltimore Southern Methodist." Edward K. Hardin (1913-1918) was the pastor during World War I, when the church had an opportunity to minister to the influx of military and government people who came to Washington. Closing the two-decade period, Clovis G. Chappell came to Mount Vernon Place in 1918 to begin a six-year pastorate. He was distinguished for his preaching.

Three of today's church school classes for ladies date back to the early years of this century. The Jaynes Class was organized in 1909. The Harlan and the Rainbow Classes were formed in 1918.

As the 1900-1919 era drew to a close, Mount Vernon Place Church moved into its present building at 900 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Although the formal opening did not take place until June 1919, the first service was held on Sunday, September 21, 1918 in the Sunday School Assembly room known as the Undercroft Auditorium.

This occupancy climaxed a 60 year effort to erect the edifice. The project succeeded because of the cooperation between several former pastors and the successive congregations, as well as their perseverance in behalf of the enterprise. This coordination of the clergy and of the laity was manifested each step of the way from 1858 to 1918:

Early in 1858, our congregation decided in a Quarterly Conference to initiate a request to the denomination's General Conference of 1858, to construct a representative Southern Methodist church in the Nation's Capital. A 13-man delegation was sent to Nashville, composed of 11 lay members and two ministers, W. W. Bennett, our first pastor, and J. C. Granbery, the current minister-in-charge. At the Conference, another former pastor, D. S. Doggett, added his support by making an appropriate Conference motion.

Although the 1858 General Conference voted approval of the petition, construction of the building was prevented by the Civil War, by the subsequent national reconstruction time-span, and by other inhibitions. Then, after a 47-year interlude, our local people again took an initiative. Aided by the current pastor William F. Locke, a Quarterly Conference of 1905 renewed efforts in behalf of the building project. It formed a special committee, and in 1906 the congregation requested the Baltimore Annual Conference to add its support, which was voted. Again, two former pastors facilitated the undertaking. Both were Conference officials. J. W. Duffey (1897-1901) was the President of the Board of Extension. Bishop Alpheus W. Wilson (1873-1878) was the Presiding Bishop of the Baltimore Annual Conference.

Assisted by its own Conference, Mount Vernon

Place Church again went before the denomination's General Conference, that of 1906, in Birmingham. This time, the General Conference took action to implement the 1858 decision. Consequently, during the next ten years the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, financed our local church building project. In the meantime, the Baltimore Annual Conference gave further aid. It set up a joint Conference/Mount Vernon Place Committee. Once more, former pastors contributed their services. J. Howard Wells and Eldridge V. Regester of the 1909-1912 years.

The 1920's - Preaching, Finances, A New Class and Music

This decade has a special meaning for today's members who came to Mount Vernon Place just before or during the 1920's.

Some folk cherish memories of the preaching of Clovis G. Chappell, who assumed the pastorate in 1918 and who filled the pulpit until 1924.

Other Mount Vernonites remember William A. Lambeth of North Carolina, the other minister of the decade. During the six years of his leadership, Mr. Lambeth took particular interest in the financial affairs of his charge. For instance, shortly after his arrival, a special collection was taken for the superannuated endowment fund. He added a touch of imagination by having the collection taken up in saddlebags which had been used by superannuated preachers. Again, in 1926, the church paid the \$48,000. balance of indebtedness on the 1918 building. This action then permitted the church officially to dedicate the edifice in 1926.

The Fellow Workers Class was founded in 1921, an important year to that class.

And music! R. Deane Shure joined the staff in 1921, beginning almost a half a century of illustrious service at Mount Vernon Place Church. He brought distinction to himself and to his church for his music. As our Minister of Music Emeritus, Dr. R. Deane Shure is an inspirational part of our heritage.

The 1930's - Outreach and Denominational Status

During the Depression of the 1930's, Mount Vernon Place Church established its social welfare program which still serves the community, although in a different form. Food, clothing and lodging were provided to needy people, particularly to transients. Under the leadership of a member, Mr. Philip T. Harpine, the A. B. Pugh Bible Class, set up relief facilities, as did other classes. To provide coordination, a United Relief Committee was organized in 1937.

Another outreach activity was created in 1936 to meet cultural needs. A drama program was instituted, which grew into the Mount Vernon Players. They were amateur actors and actresses of various religious faiths. Their motto: "Professional standards - Religious ethics." The drama program became prestigious for Mount Vernon Place Church as the years passed.

The year 1936 had another significance. Dr. John W. Rustin began his 14-year pastorate. Actually, he had been an associate minister some years before, and this was his second service at Mount Vernon Place Church. Dr. Rustin impressed his congregation and the city of Washington with his preaching at overflow services, with his enthusiasm, with his ideas, and with his ability to work with people.

As the decade closed, we changed the name of our church. For almost 90 years --- since 1850, our church had been part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In 1939, that denomination merged with two sister denominations, The Methodist Episcopal Church and The Methodist Protestant Church to form The Methodist Church. Accordingly, by action of a Special Quarterly Conference on January 3, 1940, our name was changed from Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church, our title for the next 28 years.

The 1940's - Serving the Nation's Capital

Perhaps the first half of the decade could be described in one word: **Service!**

The church was situated in the downtown area of the city of Washington, within the stream of the city's activity during those years of World War II. Both the pastor, Dr. John W. Rustin, and the congregation devoted ideas, resources and efforts to serve the city. In a word, Mount Vernon Place Church ministered to its resident congregation, and it provided a church home to the temporary military and government people who came to Washington on official duty or on recreational furlough. To meet various needs, a variety of programs were provided for religious, for cultural and for recreational purposes. For example, the Open House was popular for years, for its Saturday night dances in the Social Hall on the first floor.

In addition to the minister's preaching at standing-room services, the Church School was sensitive to the spiritual needs of people. There were differing viewpoints about Bible study, or social concerns, or lecture-type class sessions. As a result, four new classes were organized to meet special desires of groups who wished to meet together for both study and fellowship. The Rustin Couples Class and the All States Class were formed in 1940, followed by the High Quest Class in 1941 and the Forum Class in 1943.

Also, in the spirit of helping other people, but in a different manner, Mount Vernon Place Church established Camp Hull Springs for disadvantaged neighborhood children. The camp was set up during 1944 on the Potomac River about 125 miles from the city. It gave outdoor pleasures to children, and it helped to take them off hot city streets during the summer months. The camp also provided opportunity to many church members to volunteer personal service. A lodge house, cabins, and other buildings were constructed as well as repairs maintained. That was social action.

After World War II terminated in September 1945, the church continued its ministry to both its members and to other people. Its Board of Stewards organized several committees for the benefit of others, such as Welcome, Ushers, Social Welfare, Community Programs, Christian Education, Church Drama, Music, Recreation, and Evangelism.

The 1940's were active years at Mount Vernon Place and their value was in large part due to the pastor, Dr. John W. Rustin. He came to Mount Vernon Place during 1936 and he served 14 years, then the longest pastorate of a Mount Vernon minister. Dr. Rustin continued as our pastor until September 1950, when he was appointed to a pulpit in Tennessee.

1950 to 1969 - Appointments, Evangelism, Contemporary Society, and Name Changes

On October 22, 1950, the 31st pastor of our church, Dr. Albert P. Shirkey, preached his first sermon entitled "In the Beginning, God." He was also the last pastor of the 1913-1950 period who was appointed to our pulpit from outside of the Baltimore Annual Conference.

During the century of 1850 to 1950, the pastors were appointed from the Virginia or the Baltimore Conferences, or "at large." Inasmuch as our church was part of the Virginia Annual Conference from 1850 to 1866, our ministers came from that Conference. Then, we joined the Baltimore Annual Conference in 1866, which became the second source of pastors for the next 47 years.

A change was made in 1913, and during the succeeding 37 years the pastors were appointed from other conferences of seven southern states. Why? Mount Vernon Place Methodist Episcopal Church, South, enjoyed the prestige of being a major church within the denomination, and outstanding ministers were sent to our pulpit irrespective of previous Conference connections. This procedure began in 1913 when Edward K. Hardin was chosen and it ended in 1950 with the selection of Dr. Albert P. Shirkey.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Minister</u>	<u>From</u>
1913	Edward K. Hardin	St. John's Church, Rock Hill, South Carolina
1918	Clovis G. Chappel	Highland Park Church, Dallas, Texas
1924	William A. Lambeth	Main Street Church, Gastonia, North Carolina
1930	William A. Shelton	Professorship, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia
1932	Forney Hutchinson	St. Luke's Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
1934	W. Angie Smith	First Church, Shreveport, Louisiana
1936	John W. Rustin	Ghent Church, Norfolk, Virginia
1950	Albert P. Shirkey	St. Paul's Church, Houston, Texas

In addition to preaching, Dr. Shirkey emphasized evangelism. He held out-of-town evangelism services. Insisting upon services in his own church, evangelism preachers were brought for three-day services, and he conducted some himself. Also, Dr. Shirkey arranged with the Methodist Commission on Chaplains of the Armed Forces that Mount Vernon Place Church could be a church home for military personnel and dependents who lacked church ties.

During the 1950's, in particular, the Church School was emphasized as a spiritual resource. The Mount Vernon Couples Class was founded, and it later combined with other classes to form the present-day Mount Vernon Friends Class. In 1957-58, a spacious New Education Building was erected on Massachusetts Avenue.

The 1960's were difficult years for many churches in the United States, regardless of faith, including Mount Vernon Place Church. Unusual problems beset our church, and perhaps it was too busy coping with the difficulties to analyze the situation. Possibly now, some years later, we can historically and realistically reassess the 1960's.

As we look back to that decade and beyond it throughout our 127-year history, we realize that the development of the church was not a long, continuous progress. Instead, our church experienced both peaks and valleys of accomplishment. Moreover, we were sometimes influenced by national events over which we had no control. At times, our highs and lows of achievement coincided with nationwide events which were both favorable and unfortunate for our church. As a result, some pastors happened to be at Mount Vernon Place Church during a fortunate period for them to utilize their talents; other pastors were present during an unfortunate era which required them to deal with special problems.

World Wars I and II were instances of heights of accomplishment for both the congregations and the current pastor. During the 1917-1918 and the 1941-1945 periods, the church had unique opportunities to serve in the Nation's Capital. Military and government people flooded into Washington for temporary duty. Many of those persons needed a church home. Mount Vernon Place Church turned to the tasks at hand. Helpful programs of ministry and recreation were set up by the congregation, under the leadership

of Pastors Edward K. Hardin and John W. Rustin. Dr. Rustin had a special capacity of work with and to help people under those wartime conditions.

In contrast, Mount Vernon Place Church underwent valleys of accomplishment. Again, the influencing circumstances were on a national scale. Although Mount Vernon Place did not create the problems, the church had to deal with them. For instance, the Civil War of 1861-1865 brought our little church to its knees. A century later during the 1960's the changing contemporary society and the social order of our country created vexing conditions which were national in scope. Churches, including our own, faced social unrest of youth, civil rights, impact of urbanization and moves to suburbs, the Vietnam conflict, and skepticism of traditional religious values by both young people and adults. Our membership and church attendance declined. Youth activity dwindled. Members feared crime possibilities, especially at night time. Mount Vernon Place Church could not seem to find a corrective answer to its tribulations.

What did the church do? The members followed examples of preceding generations of Mount Vernonites when they struggled with difficulties. The pastor, Dr. Albert P. Shirkey, also followed the examples of predecessor ministers. Both the laity and the minister coped with the troublesome times the best that they could. Opening prayers at meetings of task forces, commissions and committees asked for spiritual guidance and strength. The members and the ministers never lost faith that somehow the church would overcome the trying experiences.

Positive action was also taken. We did not forsake a 110-year ministry in downtown Washington by moving to suburbia in order to appeal to a neighborhood constituency. Mount Vernon Place Church stressed its assets. Financial resources were improved in order to fund ministries and programs. The 30-year old active program of social action within the community was strengthened. Members continued to attend the inspirational Wednesday evening dinners and devotional services. In a word, the 1960's were a strain upon Mount Vernon Place Church, but the church maintained its devotion to its inner city ministry.

In a sense, an event of 1968 enlarged our spiritual horizons. The denominational name was changed. On April 23, 1968, The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, historically sister denominations with similar doctrines and objectives, merged into the United Methodist Church. Likewise, a week later, on May 1st, a Fourth Quarterly Conference of our local congregation declared that our new title would be Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church.

During the closing year of the decade, 1969, the pastor, Dr. Albert P. Shirkey retired, thereby concluding a 19-year pastorate. Furthermore, Dr. Shirkey was the only pastor to retire directly from Mount Vernon Place Church. We named him Pastor Emeritus.

1970 to 1977 - An Inner City Church

Within this seven year period, Mount Vernon Place Church has had two sets of ministers. Both have had to deal with the ministry of our downtown church of Washington, D. C.

Dr. Edward B. Lewis, 1969-1974

Upon the retirement of Dr. Albert P. Shirkey in 1969, Dr. Edward B. Lewis came to our church from a several-year pastorate at Capital Hill United Methodist Church of Washington. His appointment was interesting from several standpoints:

Dr. Lewis was the first pastor since 1912 to be appointed from the Baltimore Annual Conference, instead of on an 'at-large' basis within the denomination from various Conferences of several states.

The assignment broke another tradition, one of 119 years standing. Dr. Lewis was the first minister to be assigned to our church direct from another Washington church. Until 1913, our pastors had come from various charges in the Virginia and the Baltimore Annual Conferences. Afterwards until 1969, appointees came from South Carolina, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Virginia.

Appointment of a minister from another inner city church of Washington was important. Dr. Lewis brought an extensive experience with inner city church problems, and his counsel was invaluable to Mount Vernon Place.

The 1974 reassignment of Dr. Lewis from Mount Vernon Place Church was unique. It enhanced the stature of both the minister and his charge. Dr. Lewis was promoted to the position of District Superintendent of the Washington East District of the Baltimore Annual Conference. In this connection, mention is made of an opposite situation a century ago. The pastor of 1873, Alpheus W. Wilson, was appointed to Mount Vernon Place from his position as the Presiding Elder of the Washington District, Baltimore Annual Conference.

Dr. Laverne E. Rohrbaugh, Minister
Rev. Stanley G. Harrell, Associate Minister
1974 - As of 1978

The 1974 promotion of Dr. Edward B. Lewis meant that a new pastor would be assigned to Mount Vernon Place Church. As a first action, Mount Vernon Place (represented by its Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations) reappraised its mission as a church, its capabilities, and its value as a downtown church in Washington. Experience also indicated a need to reevaluate the ministerial staff. Infrequently during the past 50 years or so, Mount Vernon Place had maintained an associate minister or a minister who acted in that capacity while functioning as a Director of Christian Education. In recent years part-time, retired clergymen had assisted a pastor, particularly in visitation. All of those considerations were taken into account. Mount Vernon Place Church, our District Superintendent of the Washington Central District, and the Bishop of the Baltimore Annual Conference agreed to augment our ministerial staff. We would acquire a minister and an associate minister, both full-time. The Bishop would appoint both ministers from within the Conference, and both would be active ministers with full Conference status. It was understood that Mount Vernon Place Church would incur additional salary, allowance and pension requirements.

Dr. Laverne E. Rohrbaugh and the Rev. Stanley G. Harrell assumed the post of Minister and Associate Minister in June 1974. Each brought special qualities for the benefit of his new charge. Dr. Rohrbaugh had been a minister of a sister tradition, the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and he therefore felt strongly about pastoral visitation and evangelism. Mr. Harrell brought the zest of a younger person, which was combined with a seasoned judgment of a 15-year old experience.

Those qualities were needed. Mount Vernon Place Church was a new experience for the two new ministers, beyond the normal change of assignments. Dr. Rohrbaugh transferred from the Grace United Methodist Church of Hagerstown, Maryland, and Mr. Harrell from the Wesley United Methodist Church in Hampstead, Maryland. Their new charge, Mount Vernon Place, had different problems, those of an inner city church of a metropolitan city. Messrs Rohrbaugh and Harrell understood the situation.

On its part, the congregation understood that the new ministers would deal with problems new to them, but old to the congregation. Also, the laity gradually realized that a staff of two full-time ministers could accomplish more than could only one minister, and that their combined effort could provide a smoother operation of the church.

Dr. Rohrbaugh and Mr. Harrell have served as a team for four years. Their coordination and rapport have resulted in a unified leadership. However, each has properly had his own responsibilities. Dr. Rohrbaugh has focused attention upon preaching, upon pastoral visitation to hospitals and homes, and upon pastoral evangelism. Mr. Harrell, at some sacrifice of ministerial evangelism, has functioned as the church administrator and coordinator of programs. Both have been available for pastoral counseling and other ministerial duties.

In a sense, both the ministerial staff and the laity have had new experiences and adjustments during the past four years. But, the clergy and the laity have collaborated. There has been a growing sense of dedication to deal with common interests. Together, the ministers and the laity have striven to add to the spiritual influence of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church.

One aspect of the minister-congregation collaboration has been a mutual concern for a ministry of young adults, both members and non-members. So, in 1977, the Church School organized a new class called the Single Young Adult Fellowship.

In Retrospect - Distinctive Qualities of Our Heritage

When we evaluate the 127-year history of our church, we realize that Mount Vernon Place Church has forged a prestige as a caring and a doing church. Equally important, Mount Vernon Place has developed an individuality as a church. Certain traits seem to have characterized our church during both discouraging, troubled times and periods of achievement. What are the distinguishing characteristics of our heritage?

Our members have been friendly, loyal and dedicated.

Pastors brought meaningful ministries, each in his own way, such as an emphasis upon preaching, evangelism and missions. Moreover, they took strong interest in their former charge during later years. Completion of our 1918 building was due in large measure to the 70 years of aggressive effort of seven former pastors. Other ministers visited the pulpit as guest or evangelism preachers.

The church has been sensitive to the needs of non-members. Witness the founding of other churches, the creation of well financed and staffed programs of social action, and the evangelism outreach!

Members have attended services and involved themselves in the activities of the church. Today, they drive miles from suburbia instead of leisurely walking or taking carriages from nearby homes.

During especially difficult periods, the congregations have demonstrated determination and persistence in improving the ministry of their church.

In a word, from 1850 to the present time, Mount Vernonites have been convinced that Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church has had a mission and a ministry to fulfill in the Nation's Capital.

